Maiden Flight By Saras

*154. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a 14-seater civilian passenger aircraft 'Saras' has been indigenously developed and its prototype made a successful flight recently at the HAL Airport, Bangalore;

(b) if so, the distinctive feature of the aircraft;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the prototype aircraft has exceeded its intended weight, reducing the payload it can carry and the range;

(d) if so, the steps being taken to achieve the desired specifications; and

(e) the details of surveys conducted to project demand for the aircraft for domestic needs and the international market and plans drawn for its commercial production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) Yes Sir, the first prototype of the indigenously developed SARAS aircraft VT-XSD had its successful maiden test flight on 29th May 2004 at HAL airport, Bangalore.

(b) The distincitve features of the Aircraft are as follows:

'SARAS' is a multi-role light transport aircraft designed and developed by the National Aerospace Laboratories, Bangalore. It is designed to carry 14 passengers and the first prototype is powered by two turboprop engines (pusher) each developing 850 shaft horsepower (SHP). The second proto type will be fitted with a higher power engine of the same family (1200 SHP), which will also be the case for the production of standard aircraft. SARAS is capable of cruising upto a maximum speed of about 550 km./ hr. and upto an altitude of 30,000 ft. It has a pressurised cabin and provides passenger comfort similar to those provided by the regional jet airliners. It is capable of operating from short and semi prepared runways and in hot and humid climate. It has a wingspan of 14.7 m. and an overall length of 14.63 m. The various roles considered for SARAS include commuter, aerial survey, air ambulance, VIP transport, light cargo transport etc.

(c) Yes Sir, the prototype did exceed its intended weight. It is very common to have prototypes having higher weight than what is eventually achieved by refinements in desgin and fabrication in the production stage. In the case of SARAS, the maximum take off weight was estimated as

6100 kg. way back in 1996. This was well before the detailed design was done and the actual subsystems were selected. Mechanisms are put in place so that specified payload and range are not affected by the time SARAS aircraft reaches the stage of production.

(d) The following steps are taken to meet the desired specifications:

(i) Reduction of the margin available in the basic structure (based on analysis and structural testing);

(ii) Optimization of the structure based on design modifications; and

(iii) Fitting with the higher power engine (1200 SHP) in the 2nd prototype to meet the safety standards associated with FAR 25 requirement under single engine failure conditions.

(e) The last survey was conducted by NAL in December 2001, based on primary and secondary surveys coupled with a macro-economic model. The results of this survey indicate that in the feeder aircraft role, there is an expected cumulative demand of about 50 aircraft by 2007-08. A separate survey was also carried out, as a part of this study, for the North Eastern region of the country, based on a development model. This has predicted a demand for 18 small aircraft in this region by the year 2005. In addition of the cargo, ambulance, aerial survey, executive aircraft roles and military requirements are taken into account, the demand is expected to be 150 aircrafts in the next ten years.

Recruitment of Indians in Iraqi security

*155. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indians are being recruited into the Iraqi security unofficially;

(b) whether these Indians are being taken to Kuwait and sent to Iraq illegally where they are being treated like slaves;

(c) whether Government have conducted any enquiries in this regard;

(d) the steps being taken to stop this un-official slave trade; and

(e) the number of Indians recruited by these agencies, so far, and the number out of them that have died in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) and (b) Attention of the Government has been drawn to